

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-17 (Canceled).

Claim 18 (New): A method of upgrading sheet-like materials, comprising the following steps:

- (a) preparation of a material,
- (b) optoelectronic recording of the surface of the material,
- (c) determination of the number of defects,
- (d) determination of the volume of defects, and
- (e) repairing defects in the form of cavities using one or more binders.

Claim 19 (New): A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein the sheet-like material is leather.

Claim 20 (New): A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein hides with rawhide damage and/or surfacial manufacturing defects are used as starting material.

Claim 21 (New): A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein one or more cameras are used in step (b).

Claim 22 (New): A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein one or more sensor units, mounted on a movable unit and computer-controlled, are moved over the prepared surface.

Claim 23 (New): A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein small projections of the material are selectively cut off by means of a cutter, which may likewise be mounted on the movable unit.

Claim 24 (New): A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein the binders are selected from the group consisting of physically curable binders, thermally curable binders, binders curable by actinic radiation and combinations thereof.

Claim 25 (New): A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein radiation-curable binders are selected from the group consisting of acrylate-containing monomers, vinyl-containing monomers, urethane-containing monomers, epoxide-containing monomers, prepolymers, polymers and mixtures thereof.

Claim 26 (New): A method as claimed in any of claim 18, wherein, in step (e), the binder or binders is or are selectively introduced into the cavities determined in steps (b) to (d) and then cured.

Claim 27 (New): A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein, in step (e), in each case from 95 to 105% by volume, based on the volume of cavities in the leather and in each case based on the solids content of the cured binder, of binder are introduced into the cavities determined and calculated in steps (b) to (d).

Claim 28 (New): A method as claimed in claim 20, wherein the binder or binders is or are applied over a large area of the leather, then cured selectively in the area of the rawhide

defects and/or of the surfacial manufacturing defects and finally the uncured binder is removed.

Claim 29 (New): A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein one or more additives are added to the binder.

Claim 30 (New): A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein leather having coarse surface defects is used as a starting material and, in step (e), thickener is added to the binder and the leather is stuccoed with reduced resolution.

Claim 31 (New): A leather comprising more than 90% by weight of natural grain, obtainable by a method as claimed in claim 18.

Claim 32 (New): A leather as claimed in claim 31, obtainable from leather with rawhide damage or surfacial manufacturing defects.

Claim 33 (New): An apparatus for carrying out a method as claimed in any of claim 18, comprising a compouter, a reservoir vessel, a reservoir of binder, one or more sensor units, one or more movable units on which the sensor unit or sensor units is or are mounted, optionally one or more light sources, the sensor unit or sensor units, the movable unit or movable units and the optionally present light source or light sources being connected to a computer which controls the components of the apparatus.

Claim 34 (New): An apparatus as claimed in claim 33, further comprising a nozzle head which is mounted on the same or a further movable unit, the further movable unit being

connected to the computer and the nozzle head being connected to the computer and a reservoir of binder, the computer controlling the nozzle head and the optionally present further movable unit.